

REMARKS

By this amendment, independent claim 9 is amended. Support for the changes to claim 9 can be found, *inter alia*, from page 21 line 33 through page 24, line 26 of the specification and in Figures 4-8. Claims 1-8 and 10 were canceled previously. Claims 9 and 11-13 are presented for further examination.

The invention relates to a method for conveying a substrate from a first base having a first substrate holding mechanism to a second base having a second substrate holding mechanism using a conveyor that includes a third substrate holding mechanism. As recited in independent claim 9, each of the first, second and third substrate holding mechanisms includes a surface on which the substrate is held.

According to the claimed method, the substrate is initially held by the first substrate holding mechanism. With the first substrate holding mechanism holding the substrate, the third substrate holding mechanism is driven so as to transfer the substrate to the third substrate holding mechanism to be held thereon. Thereafter, the substrate is conveyed from the first base to the second base. With the substrate still attached to the third substrate holding mechanism, the second substrate holding mechanism is driven so as to transfer the substrate to the second substrate holding mechanism to be held thereon.

Notably, the surface of the third substrate holding mechanism is face-to-face with the surface of the first substrate holding mechanism when the substrate is transferred from the first substrate holding mechanism to the third

substrate holding mechanism, and the surface of the third substrate holding mechanism is face-to-face with the surface of the second substrate holding mechanism when the substrate is transferred from the third substrate holding mechanism to the second substrate holding mechanism.

By using the claimed method, undesired warping of the substrate can be avoided during the transfer because the substrate remains attached to the support surface from which it is being transferred until after it has been attached to the support surface to which it is being transferred (see also page 21, lines 9-14 and page 27, lines 18-20 of the specification).

The rejection of claim 9 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over Kawamura, US 5,562,600, the rejection of claim 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Kawamura, and the rejection of claims 12 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Kawamura in view of Sundar, US 2001/00116157 are respectfully traversed. Kawamura fails to disclose or suggest all of the steps required by claim 9.

Kawamura discloses a wafer transport method for transporting a wafer throughout semiconductor process equipment. The semiconductor process equipment includes a transport chamber 1 and a process chamber 2. The transport chamber 1 includes a transfer means 5 for mounting and transporting a substrate 4 between a load lock chamber 50 and process chambers 60, 62, 64, etc.

The Office Action asserts that the process chambers (e.g., 66, 68) of Kawamura comprise substrate holding mechanisms that read on the claimed first and second substrate holding mechanisms, and that the transfer means 5 of Kawamura reads on the claimed third substrate holding mechanism. However, in contrast to the assertion made in the Office Action, Kawamura does not disclose a step of “driving the second substrate holding mechanism so as to hold the substrate by the second base while the third substrate holding mechanism is attached to the substrate.”

Applicants note that the substrate of Kawamura is transferred from the transfer means 5 to the process chambers 60, 62, 64, etc. via load-unload means 40. Specifically, as taught by Kawamura, “to receive the substrate 4 transported in the process chamber by means of the transfer means 5, the load-unload means 40 is lifted ... and moved. After the substrate is mounted on the load-unload means 40, the transfer means is returned on the side of the transport chamber. The substrate mounted on the load-unload means 40 is shifted on the stage means in the process chamber, and is then subjected to a specified process” (see, e.g., column 8, lines 13-46).

Because the substrate of Kawamura is transferred from the transfer means to the process chambers via the load-unload means, Kawamura does not teach driving the second substrate holding mechanism while the third substrate holding mechanism is attached to the substrate so that the substrate is transferred from the third substrate holding mechanism to the second substrate

holding mechanism and, thus, the method of Kawamura cannot anticipate or render obvious the inventive method as presently claimed.

Sundar, which was cited merely for teaching that the substrate holding mechanism in a reduced pressure chamber is an electrostatic chuck, fails to remedy the deficiencies of Kawamura with respect to claim 9. Thus, Applicants submit that dependent claims 11-13 are patentable at least for the reasons that claim 9 is patentable.

In view of the foregoing, the application is respectfully submitted to be in condition for allowance, and prompt favorable action thereon is earnestly solicited.

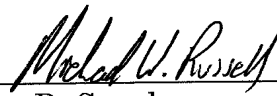
If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

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If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #010986.55283US).

Respectfully submitted,

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